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CONSIDERATIONS
UPON THE
CHOICE
OF A
SPEAKER
OF THE
House of Commons
In the Approaching SESSION.

Caterum nequicquam perierit ille : cujus interitu quid gavisi sumus, si mortuo nihilominus servituri eramus? Vivat Hercule Cicero, qui potest, supplex & obnoxius, si neque atatis, neque honorum, neque rerum gestarum pudet. Ego certè cum ipsa re bellum geram, hoc est cum regno, & imperiis extraordinariis, & dominatione & potentia, quæ supra leges se esse velit. — Nulla est tam bona conditio serviendi, quâ non deterrear. Epist. M. Bruti ad T. Pomp. Atticum.

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CONSIDERATIONS upon the Choice of a S P E A K E R.

EVERY Man who has at any time sat in the House of Commons, must be sensible, that the Choice of a Speaker is a matter of the greatest importance with relation to the Freedom of that House: and if Liberty be there destroy'd in the Root, it cannot survive in the Branches. For this reason, as is very well observed in the King's Declaration, when Prince of *Orange*, The evil Counsellors of the late Reign thought the surest method to enslave us was, *by undermining the Liberty of Parliaments*: And one step which such evil Counsellors have always made in that execrable attempt, has bin by Places, Bribes and Pensions, to take off the Speaker, well knowing that the Freedom of *that House* depends in a great measure upon their *Speaker*, as our Laws and Rights depend upon *that House*.

A Man may easily foresee, that whenever *Slavery* shall be intirely fix'd in *England*, as it is among almost all our Neighbors, it must be done by a *corrupted Parliament* establishing a *Standing Army*: by which means this Kingdom will feel the effects of Tyranny from that Place which ought to be the Source of Liberty.

Upon this Foundation my Lord *Burleigh* grounded his Maxim, *That England can never be thorowly ruin'd but by a Parliament*. And I am sure a Parliament can never be more thorowly fitted to ruin *England*, than when by the influence of many Members brib'd by Places of Profit and Pensions, a Speaker shall in some future Reign be put into the Chair, to whom those that are his Friends can allow no

other Character than Confidence and Dexterity ; and that Character, those who shall then oppose him, will not deny to him.

Such a one may be granted to be an able Man ; but those Abilities in that place the Nation may justly dread.

Can it with any colour of Reason or Prudence be said, *That there is no danger, let the Disposition and Obligations of the Speaker be what they will : He is but a single Man ; and besides does not determine Questions ?* 'Tis true, the ablest General alone, and without Troops, is insignificant : But when regulated and well paid Forces have a bold and skilful Leader at their Head, they must conquer ; especially if those they encounter be an undisciplin'd Militia just brought out of their several Counties.

Mankind can judge of few things otherwise than by outward appearances, which are often deceitful. This is the Cause, and may be also an excuse, if former Parliaments were disappointed in their Speaker, whose Frailty, after he was chosen, may have bin overcome by the Gifts and prevailing Courtship of the Ministers of State. But surely the Majority of a House of Commons will never chuse one to be their Speaker, whom they find (if the Expression may be pardoned) already debauch'd, and once rejected on the like occasion.

This as it will be the first step, so is it of the highest consequence ; for an Error here, like one in War, can never be retrieved : And undoubtedly 'twill be thought a very ill Omen of what may be expected from this House of Commons, if they should so unfortunately stumble at the Threshold.

It has bin criminal formerly in a Speaker of the House of Commons to go to Court : but the Duty of the Office of a Lord of the Treasury must bring him there, and under the greatest Temptation of compliance to every thing that
is

is demanded. Nor will the ill effect this may have upon the Liberty of Parliaments stop here; for 'tis most certain that such things as are either allow'd or conniv'd at under the Reigns of good Princes, will be made Precedents under the bad.

Freedom of Speech, and other essential Orders of the House, may probably be endanger'd by one who has declar'd he knows no *Order* but the *Majority*: and if he ventur'd to speak so plainly, whilst we may presume he was aiming at that Honor which some would confer upon him, how will he tyrannize with a *Majority* that he will either find or bring into the Interest of the Court, when he is possess'd of the Speaker's Chair?

There are some publick Trusts, that in their nature are inconsistent with one another, and ought never to be joined in the same Person, being design'd to be a check upon each other: And a good Man can neither with decency nor honesty unite such different Trusts in himself. But neither Decency nor Honesty will bound the Ambition of some Men.

Suppose there has bin the greatest Misapplication of the publick Revenues at a time when the Kingdom is under the extremest necessity, is it probable that a Speaker will be impartial, or any way assistant to the House in an inquiry after such Mismanagement, who was Lord of the Treasury during the time of it?

Suppose a Gentleman was sixteen thousand Pounds Debtor to the Crown upon the Revolution, and in a particular Clause of the Act of Indemnity procur'd from the Court a Release of that Debt; Can it be expected, that in Enquiries how vast Sums have bin imbezeld since that time, the Grand Inquest of the Nation will be able to make any progress with such a Foreman?

Suppose

Suppose there is a Debt growing every day upon the Nation by Seamen not discharg'd, while the Mony given for so necessary a purpose has bin dispos'd of for keeping up an Army that should have bin disbanded pursuant to the Determination of the last Parliament upon the most mature and solemn Debates; Must not the House expect Interruptions in bringing on that matter, Difficulties in wording, and Delays in putting the Question from one who in his Station at Court may be perhaps charg'd with advising the keeping up of the Army; and in the last Parliament was the best and most artificial Advocate against disbanding it at all?

These and many other things of the highest Importance to our selves and our Posterity, will fall under the consideration of the Parliament in the ensuing Session, it being evident that this time of Peace is the most proper, if not the only season for rectifying Miscarriages; the Examination and Punishment of which, it may be alledg'd, was prudent to adjourn during the War.

If a Great Officer be made Speaker, 'tis the most natural thing in the world to believe that he will use the same Arts to keep his Office as he did to get it: And if it be considered how several Members of our late Parliaments got into the most advantageous places of Profit, whom the Court would not have seen, nor the Country felt, had they not bin first Members, it must be granted that they were advanced not by serving the Nation, but the Court.

Let not any Man think this distinction of *Court and Country* Party in the House of Commons to be groundless or ill meant: for if ever a Parliament was without such a distinction, it was when a Court was without such Ministers; who instead of serving the Government, serve themselves upon it, at the expence of their Master's Honour, and by impoverishing their Country; who instead of being qualified to render his Majesty great, and the People happy, seem only

only to be fitted to bring the King, if it were possible, into disesteem, and to make the Kingdom miserable. And whereas the Honour, Safety and Strength of the King depends upon having no other Interest than that of his People, 'tis his Majesty's misfortune to be represented by the Actions of such Officers, as if his and the Peoples Interest were not only divided, but inconsistent. If such as these are leading Men in a House of Commons, they give just Reason to all that love *England*, and have upon Principles of Liberty freely expos'd their Lives and Estates for the present Government, to make this *necessary Distinction*, lest some Men should be induc'd to believe that Kingship it self is insupportable, and others that Parliaments are a Burden.

'Tis this Distinction must preserve the Honour of our ancient Constitution of Government, till it may flourish under the Influence of a Parliament, in which none or few who have gainful Offices shall be Members of the House of Commons. But a Bill to that purpose is not to be expected, when a Great Officer is Speaker.

The Executive Power ought not to be lodg'd in that House, because it would deprive the Kingdom of that which is the noblest and most useful Work of their Representatives, *The calling ill Ministers to account*, and the preserving a steady Administration in the subordinate Officers of the Government.

But in a House of Commons abounding with Officers, if any one of them be attack'd, it alarms the whole Fraternity, and they all engage to bring him off, tho it be by the scandalous way of putting the Question for Candles, and carrying it in the Negative. This was the case of the Admiralty last Parliament, and may be of the Treasury this Session, if Fortune prove so propitious, that one of their Number be made Speaker. This Point gain'd, the next will probably be to establish the Army, and then to suspend or repeal the Triennial Act.

No-

Nothing came equal such a Choice, unless we could suppose the House of Commons should fix upon some old Prostitute of the exploded Pension'd Parliament in *Charles* the Second's Reign, who has from that time bin tricking in the House in so shameful a manner, that the several Periods of his Life may be mark'd out by the bargains he has made there, when the Court has come up to his price.

His Corruption in that Station has bin as notorious as his Ability to do Mischief; for both were extraordinary.

The Speaker's Chair may upon some ACCOUNTS be convenient to such a one at this time; but I presume the House will have as little regard to his Conveniency, as he has had, and will have to the Liberties of his Country.

In a word, if it be expected that Misdemeanors be inquired into, beneficial Laws made, and those which we already possess, transmitted to our Posterity, it must be either prodigious Folly, or an unaccountable Fate, if *such a Man*, or a *Lord of the Treasury*, be chosen Speaker of this House of Commons.

T H E E N D.

